

# RED THREADS

Bound #2 Artwork by Associate Professor Beili Liu

## Newsletter for the Center for Asian American Studies

"An invisible red thread connects those who are destined to meet, regardless of place or circumstances. The thread may stretch or tangle, but will never break."  
—Chinese Proverb



Ainee Athar leading the Undocu-Asian Teach-In on October 17, 2013

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## Undocu-Asian: Unapologetic and Unafraid

By Nicholas Chan

The Undocu-Asian movement affects over 1.4 million individuals making up 12% of the U.S Asian population. The Center for Asian American Studies helped spearhead that movement on the UT campus. Student activists worked with several campus organizations like the Multicultural Engagement Center and the University Leadership Initiative to organize Undocumented Longhorns Week. The weeklong series of events featured panels, discussions, teach-ins about the immigration reform movement, and a talk from undocumented Filipino American journalist Jose Antonio Vargas.

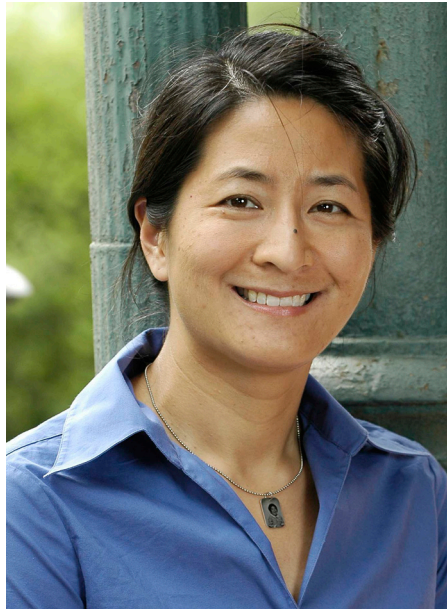
Highlighting her personal experiences as an

undocumented Asian, Ainee Athar, a recent graduate of the university, led the campaign for the week of events and facilitated the main Undocu-Asian teach-in. During the teach-in, Athar shared multiple videos and stories of undocumented Asians and their struggle to simply survive because being undocumented deprives them of simple resources and services others take for granted. Undocumented college students can't apply for federal aid or scholarships, vote or have a say in government, and can't work because they don't have a nine-digit social security number. Nor can they apply for a driver's license simply to drive to school or work.

(cont. on P. 4)



## Message from the Outgoing Director



Dear Friends and Supporters of CAAS,

I wind down my 8-years as director of CAAS with great pride and some regrets. As with any institutional initiative begun with great hope and potential, much can be accomplished even as many goals remain as yet unfulfilled. Building on the brave struggles and commitment of my predecessors, Art Sakamoto, Rowena Fong, and Mia Carter, solid foundations have been laid for the continued growth and expansion of Asian American Studies in Texas and after all, the 14 years of CAAS's existence are brief compared to the more than 4 decades over which the African American and Mexican American studies programs have evolved into departments.

During my tenure, CAAS has grown to include 12 core faculty, including new assistant professor North Cooc in the Department of Special Education. The breadth and depth of our community contacts has expanded and now sustains working relationships between UT and organizations such as the Austin History Center, the Vietnamese American Heritage Foundation, the Network of Asian American Organizations, the Asian Pacific American Heritage Association, the Greater Austin Asian Chamber of Commerce, Asian Family Support Services of Austin, Texas Exes Asian American Network, Austin Asian American Film Festival, and the Asian American Resource Center. Through these collaborations, CAAS pursues its ethnic studies mission of fostering awareness and experience of community issues and needs among our students.

CAAS has benefited from partnerships with many of the outstanding academic programs on campus. A shortlist of highlights includes the 2007 conference "Asia in Latin America: Across Four Continents" with the Lozano Long Institute for Latin American Studies; the 2009 conference "American Crossroads: Migration, Communities, & Race" with the Warfield Center, Center for Mexican American Studies, and the Donald D. Harrington Fellows Program; over 2009-2010 "Lectures in Art and Diaspora: Asian in the Americas" with the Department of Art + Art History; Lectures in the Black Diaspora; the 2010 Association for Asian American Studies annual conference; and the 2013 conference "TransPacific China in the Cold War" with the Institute for Historical Studies. For many of these programs, CAAS has worked regularly with the relevant departments and the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, the College of Liberal Arts, South Asia Institute, Center for East Asian Studies, and the Humanities Institute.

Between 2007 and 2014, over thirty majors have graduated in Asian American Studies (AAS). In addition to the AAS major, minor, and honors program, CAAS has added a graduate portfolio program (2014) and developed an Advisory Committee to help fundraise and advocate for CAAS. I would like to thank our inaugural members: the Honorable Martha J. Wong who has endowed our first scholarship fund, Richard Jung, Ali Khataw, Channy Soeur, Lesley Varghese, and Gene Wu for undertaking the cause of Asian American studies in Texas. Last but far from least, I want to commend the work of the wonderful staff without whom CAAS would have long fallen to pieces: Barbara Jann, Kenyatta Dawson, and Sona Shah.

We can but look to a better and brighter future in years to come—I wish my successor Sharmila Rudrappa the best of luck!

Thank you for your continuing interest and support!  
Sincerely,

Madeline Y. Hsu  
Associate Professor, Department of History

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## Message from the Incoming Director



I am honored to serve as director of the Center for Asian American Studies beginning Fall 2014. From having arrived on campus just when the program was taking its first baby steps back in 2001 with just assistant professors John Park, Jim Lee, and Kim Alidio under the directorship of professor Mia Carter, we have come a long way indeed. Today we have 12 core faculty from fields as diverse as Social Work, Communication, Asian Studies, History, English, Anthropology, and Sociology. In addition, Dr. North Cooc from Harvard University will begin teaching with us and the Department of Special Education at the assistant rank beginning this fall. And, Dr. Kareem Khubchandani, dance scholar from Performance Studies in Northwestern University joins us, and the Center for Women and Gender Studies as a post-doc for the next two years.

Though we have grown in the past 15 years we have a significant amount of work to accomplish at the Center in the next four years. The number of majors in the College of Liberal Arts has dipped, as have liberal arts majors around the country, a national trend precipitated by the state of the economy. This drop in COLA majors has affected the Center for Asian American Studies too, and we need to shore up our numbers. To that end the faculty at the Center are working toward revamping the major to meet the demands of the current workplace and the economy.

In the next four years my aim is to move the Center's academic program more toward a research model in partnership with Asian American communities. I hope to direct our graduate students, who will work in teams with undergraduate students, to develop research

projects that are meaningful and significant to our communities. The larger goal is to identify and research the issues that face us as Asian Americans in Texas, and to offer solutions in partnership with the city and state.

Under my directorship I want to continue to build on what Dr. Madeline Hsu has accomplished, and grow our Center for Asian American Studies into a vibrant academic institute. And in that process I want to foster closer relations between town and gown, and to that end I hope you will all join me.

I look forward to working with all of you over the next four years. Thank you for this opportunity.

Sincerely,

Sharmila Rudrappa  
Director, Center for Asian American Studies  
Associate Professor, Department of Sociology

**WHO WE ARE** — Founded in 2000, The Center for Asian American Studies (CAAS) at The University of Texas at Austin is an interdisciplinary academic program promoting understanding and awareness of Asian Pacific American (APA) issues and communities. We house undergraduate major, minor, and honors programs and organize lectures, films, conferences, speakers' series, discussion forums, and collaborate partnerships with community and campus organizations. CAAS seeks to develop and highlight transnational and hemispheric perspectives and narratives of Asians in the Americas and the American South.

### Core Faculty

#### North Cooc

Assistant Professor of Education

#### Rowena Fong

Professor of Social Work

#### Heather Hindman

Associate Professor of Asian Studies

#### Madeline Y. Hsu

Associate Professor of History

#### S. Akbar Hyder

Associate Professor of Asian Studies

#### Madhavi Mallapragada

Assistant Professor of Radio-Television-Film

#### Robert M. Oppenheim

Associate Professor of Anthropology

#### Sharmila Rudrappa

Associate Professor of Sociology

#### Snehal Shingavi

Assistant Professor of English

#### Nancy K. Stalker

Associate Professor of Asian Studies

#### Cynthia Talbot

Associate Professor of History

#### Eric Tang

Assistant Professor of African and African Diaspora Studies

#### Kamala Visweswaran

Associate Professor of Anthropology



## Undocu-Asian: Unapologetic and Unafraid (cont. from P. 1)

With over 400 undocumented students on the UT campus, the story line seems to be the same. “Helpless, powerless, an extreme injustice creating broken families,” were just a few words that reverberated throughout the stories shared. Undocumented students often suffer from depression or lack of motivation to do well in school. An undocumented Filipino student in New York shared, “everything I was dreaming about was fake...all a lie.” With these tough conditions, there are many cases of undocumented students having to find jobs where they’re paid under the table at a wage much less than if they had papers simply to fund one class a semester at a community college. At this rate, they would take over 20 years to gain their college degree. “It’s not the best life, but it’s the only one I can have right now.”

That this immigration issue affects only one community is a common myth. Athar explained that “Asians are the fastest growing immigrant population in the United States.” She described Asian perspectives and shared the story of her family being put on a watch list following the 9/11 attacks. “Muslim people started being systematically deported—entire populations of Muslims deported. 13,000 of men in deportation proceedings—sign up or you will be deported immediately.” Ju Hong, a student from UC-Berkeley shared his fears, “every night before I go to sleep, I check my door before I go to sleep because that’s how panicked I am.” Undocu-Asian experiences conveyed continuing treatment as perpetual foreigners facing attitudes of “we want your labor, not your lives.”

The teach-in also covered the criminalization of the immigration movement in which corporations work with the American Legislative Exchange

Council (ALEC) to pass legislation to disproportionately criminalize offenders to make a profit whenever someone is thrown into prison. ALEC is the same group that created the Stand Your Ground law underlying the Trayvon Martin case. The immigration laws racialize specific groups, including Asians. Discussion also addressed the Comprehensive Immigration Reform bill which would simultaneously provide a pathway to citizenship while heavily militarizing the border. Border patrol was actually one of the programs not closed during the government shut-down even though border crossings were at historic lows, the government spends over \$18 billion patrolling the border at a cost greater than that of the DEA, FBI, and Secret Service combined.

The movement has made huge strides. The DREAM Act was actually inspired by an undocumented Asian student simply trying to pursue a higher education. The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program provides immunity from deportation for 2 years and allows undocumented individuals to get work permits. Finally, the student groups on campus worked together to draft legislation in support of Undocumented Longhorns Week. Backlash and pushback on the resolution from UT’s Student Government only affirmed the need for undocumented students and allies on campus to challenge assembly members. However, with extended discussion, grassroots advocacy, and a huge showing in the gallery the night of the vote, the resolution was passed. Yet again, the UT community joined hands to create change and provide protections to students on an issue affecting many communities of color.

*Nicholas Chan works at CAAS as the student associate and is majoring in Asian Studies and Government.*

### A Message from New AAS Core Faculty, Dr. North Cooc



Hello! I am very excited to join the Center for Asian American Studies at UT this fall. I spent the last five years at the Harvard Graduate School of Education investigating a range of education policy issues, especially those related to special education and Asian American students and families. My other research interests include immigration, international and comparative education, and childhood literacy. Prior to HGSE, I worked at a research firm in Washington, D.C. and conducted evaluations of out-of-school time programs, literacy and arts initiatives, and federal special education policies. And before my career as a researcher, I taught middle school English in rural Japan. I was born in Hong Kong but grew up in Sacramento. At some point in life, my Cantonese became just as bad as my Japanese but I am proud of knowing both languages and cultures. A common theme in the various paths that I have taken to UT is a firm belief in and commitment to education. I look forward to meeting everyone this fall and making CAAS a new home.

*North Cooc is an assistant professor in the College of Education, Department of Special Education and core faculty with the Center for Asian American Studies.*

### Asian American Studies Graduates

Congratulations to our majors graduating from The University of Texas at Austin!

Tu-Uyen Ngoc Nguyen  
Khai Duy Pham  
William Taylor Pichette  
Kristine Marie Staggs  
Diane Le Tram  
Sarah B. Williams  
Angie Chu Yang Zhou



(l-to-r) Edward Yu, Petro On, Kristine Staggs, Madeline Hsu, Khai Pham, Tu-Uyen Nguyen, William Pichette, Sisi Jiang, Marlon Hedrick, Sona Shah, Julian Joseph at the spring 2014 CAAS graduation dinner at Clay Pit.

## Dr. Deepa Kumar Visits UT Austin

By Dr. Snehal Shingavi



Professor Deepa Kumar with Professor Snehal Shingavi

A troubling sequence of events motivated the Center for Asian American Studies to invite Dr. Deepa Kumar to speak at UT Austin.

In March of 2012, *The Daily Texan*, the student newspaper of the University of Texas, published an advertisement, which suggested that Islam and violence were synonymous. It was printed as a part of "Islamic Apartheid Week," a project sponsored by David Horowitz's Freedom Center, which has been pressing partisan arguments about the threat posed to the US by "Islam."

Then in September of 2012, the University of Texas, along with several other universities in the country, received bomb threats. In reporting to the media, the press liaison at UT Austin said, "At 8:35 a.m. the University received a call from a male with a Middle Eastern accent claiming to have placed bombs all over campus. He said he was with Al Qaeda [sic] and these bombs would go off in 90 minutes. President Powers was notified and it was decided to evacuate all of the buildings out of an abundance of caution." The bomb threat was later exposed as a hoax, and the university took steps to initiate planning in response to the charges that it had too hastily racially profiled the phone caller.

CAAS reached out to a number of campus groups—the Campus Climate Response

Team, the Campus Diversity and Strategic Initiatives, the Office of the President, and several departments and centers—in order to organize promoting Islamophobia awareness. The overarching goal was to make students and staff on campus more aware about Islamophobia and to begin initiating programs that might help Muslims on campus to deal with the varieties of hostility that they might encounter.

The coalition of groups then agreed to bring Dr. Deepa Kumar, associate professor of media studies at Rutgers University, to speak at UT. Kumar's most recent book *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire* (Haymarket Books, 2012) argues that "Islam" has to be repeatedly constructed as an enemy in the service of various empires which can offer no rational argument to their populations about why they are going to war. Kumar argues, in part, that justifications for war are created by manufacturing images of Muslims abroad as congenital enemies to American values of democracy, feminism, and freedom. These threats are constructed, in part, through what Kumar calls "green scares," or artificial and inflated worries about the threats of domestic terrorism which has justified a regime of surveillance and fear that follows every Muslim around.

Kumar gave two workshops, one tailored towards staff and another for student activists, and then spoke to a packed auditorium of nearly 250. Shehnaz Haqqani, Middle Eastern languages and cultures graduate student spoke to *The Daily Texan* newspaper: "It's important to be reminded of context, because, if not, we end up hating people without understanding their reasoning."

*Snehal Shingavi is assistant professor in the Department of English and core faculty at the Center for Asian American Studies.*

### The Honorable Martha J. Wong, Ed. D Scholarship



The Honorable Martha J. Wong, Ed. D Scholarship honors UT students majoring or minoring in Asian American Studies for excellence in academic attainment and leadership.

Petro On is the first recipient of this scholarship. On is a junior majoring in Asian American Studies and received this award in recognition of his academic attainment and social justice leadership in the arenas of discrimination against Asian Americans and workplace exploitation.



## Faculty and Staff Notes

Undergraduate senior, **NICHOLAS CHAN**, joined CAAS as a student associate in Fall 2013. He is currently a Government and Asian Studies double major. He interned at the Department of State's Foreign Service Institute in Spring 2014 and spent the summer at UC Berkeley's Goldman Public Policy School as a Public Policy/International Affairs Fellow. He also serves as the Director of Operations for Asian Desi Pacific Islander American Collective, the AAPI student organization housed in the Multicultural Engagement Center.

**NERMEEN DHUCA**, CAAS student associate in 2013-2014, is spending her summer as a Product Development Engineering Intern at Chrysler in Detroit, Michigan. She works primarily with the Systems and Components Engineering team on the ACC (Adaptive Cruise Control) system which included autonomous deceleration and acceleration.

CAAS Graduate Intern, **DANA HARADA**, graduated this May with a Master of Education from the Program in Higher Education Leadership at the University of Texas at Austin. For the last two years she was a Graduate Assistant at the Program in Higher Education Leadership. She also interned at the Bachelor of Business Administration International Programs office for the past year. She is working at CAAS over the summer.

**HEATHER HINDMAN** was promoted to associate professor in the department of Asian studies. She published Mediating the Global: Expatriate's Forms and Consequences in Kathmandu (Stanford University Press, 2013). Mediating the Global uncovers the day-to-day experiences of elite foreign workers and their families living in Nepal, and the policies and practices that determine their daily lives. In this book, Hindman calls for a consideration of the complex role that global middlemen and women play, not merely in implementing policies, but as objects of policy.

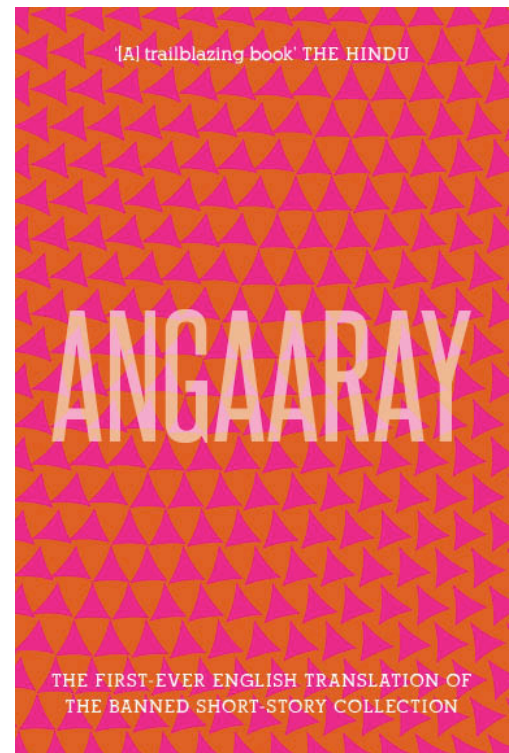
**MADELINE HSU** co-edited with Lon Kurashige and Yujin Yaguchi a special issue of Pacific Historical Review titled "Conversations on Transpacific History" which includes her article "Chinese and American Collaborations Through Education Exchange During the Exclusion Era,

1872-1955," 83:2 (May 2014): 314-332. Hsu's professional activities included service as Sections Representative of the Association for Asian American Studies, Vice-President for the International Society for the Study of Chinese Overseas, editorial board of the Journal of American Ethnic History, program committee member for the Organization of American Historians, invited presenter at the NEH-funded teacher's workshop "Asian Pacific American Immigrants in the Pacific Northwest: Transforming the Nation," and exhibit consultant for the Smithsonian National Museum of American History and the New York Historical Society.

**BEILU LIU**, associate professor in the department of art and art history, participated in 'Miniartextil' an annual international exhibition of contemporary art showing the best in Textile Art. The event was organized by the Cultural Association Arte&Arte in Como, Italy. Liu conceived "Thirst," a collaborative public art project presented by Women and Their Work Gallery. Installed between the Pfluger and Lamar bridges in Town Lake, "Thirst" features a tree felled in the recent Bastrop fires to evoke the 300 million trees lost in the recent Texas drought. See ThirstArt.org

**MADHAVI MALLAPRAGADA** published her book Virtual Homelands: Indian Immigrants and Online Cultures in the United States (University of Illinois Press, 2014). Mallapragada analyzes home pages and other online communities organized by diasporic and immigrant Indians from the late 1990s through the social media period. Engaging the shifting aspects of belonging, immigrant politics, and cultural citizenship by linking the home page, household, and homeland as key sites, Mallapragada illuminates the contours of belonging and reveals how Indian American struggles over it trace back to the web's active mediation in representing, negotiating, and reimagining "home." Mallapragada is an assistant professor in the department of Radio-Television-Film and core faculty in Asian American Studies.

**SHARMILA RUDRAPPA**, associate professor in Sociology and core faculty in Asian American Studies, received a Faculty Research Assistance Grant from UT to work on her book



manuscript on surrogate mothers in India, tentatively titled "Outsourced: Surrogate Mothers on Bangalore's Reproductive Assembly Lines."

**SNEHAL SHINGAVI** edited and translated into English, Angaaray, the 1932 Urdu short-story collection that was banned by the British in India. First published in 1932, this slim volume of short stories created a firestorm of public outrage for its bold attack on the hypocrisy of conservative Islam. Inspired by the works of James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, the young writers who penned this collection--Sajjad Zaheer, Ahmed Ali, Rashid Jahan and Mahmud uz-Zafar--were eager to revolutionize Urdu literature. Instead, they invited the wrath of the establishment; the collection was burned in popular protests and banned by the British authorities within a year. Nevertheless, Angaaray spawned a new generation of Urdu writers and led to the formation of the Progressive Writers' Association, whose members included, among others, stalwarts like Ismat Chughtai, Manto, Premchand, and Faiz.

**SARAH STEINBOCK-PRATT**, CAAS lecturer, got an assistant professor position at the

University of Alabama starting this fall. She also has an article titled "It Gave Us Our Nationality": US Education, the Politics of Dress and Transnational Filipino Student Networks," coming out this fall in *Gender & History*.

**ERIC TANG**, assistant professor in the African and African Diaspora Studies Department and core faculty with the Center for Asian American Studies, published the report "Outlier: The Case of Austin's Declining African- American Population" Institute for Urban Policy Research & Analysis Issues Brief (May 2014). He is also

a faculty fellow with UT's Institute for Urban Policy Research & Analysis and the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement. He is completing a book about refugees and the U.S. urban crisis entitled "Unsettled." His current research focuses on the past and present of racial segregation in Austin, Texas.

## Dr. Mae Ngai Visits UT Austin By Dr. Madeline Hsu



On Oct. 14, 2013, the leading legal and immigration historian, Mae Ngai, lectured on "A Nation of Immigrants?: History, Politics and Immigration Reform" at Avaya Auditorium. Dr. Ngai, who is Professor of History and Lung Family Professor of Asian American Studies at Columbia University, used the occasion to disembowel key myths and misunderstandings impeding passage of immigration reform today. Despite perceptions that America is being overrun by unprecedented numbers of illegal immigrants who not only enter without permission, but remain stubbornly nonassimilating, Dr. Ngai provided quantitative information to show that current entry levels correspond to those at the turn of the twentieth century. Then as now, nativist fears surged leading to passage of some of the most restrictive immigration laws in US history. By mid-century, however, these immigrant populations and their descendants—Jews, Italians, Greeks, Poles, and other southern and eastern Europeans—have become inextricable

elements of the heterogeneous fabric of American life.

Since the legal liberalizations of 1965, immigrant numbers have once again peaked but with the majority originating in Asia and central and South America. Although the law's employment preferences have ensured that disproportionate numbers of Asian immigrants arrive highly educated and economically privileged, the 1965 Immigration Act created our enormous, present-day problem of 11 million undocumented immigrants, primarily from Central and South America, by imposing numeric caps for the first time on hemispheric migration. The millions accustomed to crossing relatively unencumbered in and out of neighboring countries suddenly found themselves criminalized and punished for what had been a natural flow between linked locations in pursuit of work and connections to family and friends. Dr. Ngai explored the restrictions of law but also diminishing economic opportunity that has kept

this group locked out from gaining mainstream access to upward socioeconomic mobility and acceptance in the United States. In contrast to conditions through the mid-twentieth century, declining investments in public education and the shift away from manufacturing toward finance and services as mainstays of the American economy have sharply restricted the upward mobility, and thus assimilation, of working-class immigrants and their descendants.

This event was co-sponsored by the Humanities Institute through the Paul and Mary Ho Endowment, the Institute for Historical Studies in the Department of History, the Department of American Studies, and the Clark Center for Australia and New Zealand Studies.

*Madeline Hsu is the director of the Center for Asian American Studies and associate professor in the Department of History.*



## B.A. Student Profiles

### PETRO ON

My initial involvement with the Asian American Studies major was probably from the Multicultural Engagement Center. I remember Tony Vo telling me about the major and why he joined when he was an undergrad. I realized at this point that he was already reeling me in to the major with all the conversations we had about intersectionality and being Asian. I had been a Biology major first and that happened through family pressure, and what society thought "Asians should do". It really dawned on me that this wasn't something that I was interested in but I loved having conversations about oppression, and Asians' everyday struggle in this racist country. I found enlightenment through the conversations I had and continue to have with my fellow colleagues who think the same as I do. It is a real honor to be a part of this amazing major which has opened up many doors for me. It has taught me to think about race critically and to learn how to think outside the box.

I use these skills every day when I have conversations with people. I listen, learn and think about their stories. This really makes me think about the everyday oppressions that people face and how what I am learning is affecting them.

I am currently working as an intern with AFSCME (American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees). I am a field organizer working on helping people create, or build their union. I recently worked on a campaign with California United Home Care Workers a local union that is affiliated with AFSCME. I helped them get fee payers to become full time members of the union. This job is fulfilling, because everything I learned in CAAS has prepared me thus far for this internship. I have learned to use my knowledge of oppression and relate it to how they can better their working conditions.

I have those meaningful conversations and

help people realize that their oppression in the work place can be solved as long as everyone is together on the same issue. There is power in numbers and unions understand this very basic concept. In the future I would like to apply to AFSCME and become an organizer to help further this world into equality.



### TU-UYEN NGOC NGUYEN

My first two majors in Classics and Latin allowed me to study abroad in Rome for three months. Locals would ask, "Where are you from?" I would say "Vietnam" because I knew the U.S. was not very popular in Italy at that time. I knew I was lying. Was I being careful or just cowardly? When I chose Asian American Studies as my third major, I began my inquiry into why that question is linked to my Vietnamese American experience as a Classics and Latin major.

Finding Asian American Studies was the most productive choice I ever made on campus because I needed to know: am I Asian or American? Can I be both? I learned that these questions of identity are very productive tools in recognizing how I can best contribute to my community as a student, worker, and neighbor.

Asian American Studies also provided many role models for personal, academic, and professional development. When I became a major, I found a community of professionals who could show me how to survive and thrive at UT and greater Austin. I worked as an intern for both the Asian American Resource Center, and the CAAS to prepare exhibits concerning Asian adoption and Asian American Studies at UT. AAS coursework prepared me to volunteer

for the Texas After Violence Project, learning how Islamophobia is connected to the Texas Death Penalty through oral history. This summer I continue to work with University Leadership Initiative to raise awareness about immigration reform and to continue Asian American Pacific Islander outreach. I am also volunteering at the Multicultural Refugee Coalition's Festival Beach Community Garden and Sewing Program.

This summer I continue to work at UT libraries to save up for a six-month sabbatical in Vietnam. I will improve my Vietnamese fluency, teach English as a native speaker, and learn more about Vietnamese literary classics. In preparation for starting a PhD program in Classics in the next two years, I will be taking the GRE and visiting the institutions this fall. I am still debating Law School. If money were not an issue, I would go to law school, get a PhD in comparative literature studying ancient Greek, Latin, classical Chinese, and Chữ Nôm (classical Vietnamese/Sino-Vietnamese/Vietnamese written in Chinese script), and Sanskrit. I would also earn a PhD in Asian American Studies so that I could be a role model for students who have productive questions about themselves and role in their community.



## B.A. Student Profiles

### SISI JIANG

A few years ago, I am pretty sure that I wouldn't be caught dead at the Center for Asian American Studies, mostly because minority issues are so often seen as a "political agenda." In my experience, acknowledging Asian American heritage has always been about giving people more ammunition to use against me. If I wasn't a "funny foreigner", then I was an "Asian sellout". Politics seemed like a personal danger. Now I realize that it is, but not in the ways that I thought.

Now that I realize the scope of Asian American issues, I understand that a person without politics is in constant personal danger. If one does not have the framework and integrity to define themselves, then they are at risk of being defined by others. Words such as "model minority" and "yellow peril" have power if

society allows them to. We are a part of society whether we like it or not. I am a part of society whether I like it or not.

In the cases of my Asian American friends and I, we were often not even fit to be seen as vulnerable minorities. If we are not white nor a person of color nor a foreigner, then what in the world are we? That question was probably one of the things that led me to Sona Shah's office. Learning about Asian American Studies is probably one of the ways in which I can affirm that "Yes, I am a real person".

I am a double major in history as well, which I believe will provide me with more opportunities. I am satisfied with my current arrangement either way because AAS has provided me with

a way to breathe in American society without suffocating. That in itself is invaluable to finding my own way in what is commonly misunderstood as the "real world" of middle-upper class adults. The world has always been singular and whole: history and experience has taught me that much.



## War, Genocide, and Justice: Cambodian American Memory Work

By Tu-Uyen Nguyen

On March 4, 2014, Dr. Cathy Schlund-Vials presented her monograph, War, Genocide, and Justice: Cambodian American Memory Work, at the University Teaching Center building to a room packed with students, faculty, and staff. As a leading scholar in Cambodian American culture and diaspora, Schlund-Vials resurrected a political time period as it is relevant to American pop subculture, history, and human rights today: Pol Pot time and the Khmer Rouge killing fields of Cambodia during the Vietnam War era. Although Schlund-Vials claimed the title was "unimaginative," the lecture focused on the continuing relevance of remembering the genocide through Cambodian American memory work by hip hop and creative performance artists today.

Schlund-Vials connected the Killing Fields Era to her own origins as a biracial Cambodian American, sharing her lost memories with her twin brother who is currently working as a LAPD forensics detective. When it comes to genocide and human rights, we first think of World War II Holocaust memorials. Schlund-Vials explained how James Young's term "memory work" raises debates about who is represented and who is left out in these monuments.

As for the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C., the 1.1 million South Vietnamese soldiers are not listed with the 58,000 American soldiers who also lost their lives fighting the Communist regime. The secret wars in the neighboring countries of Cambodia and Laos are seemingly forgotten, along with the millions of refugees who have resettled in the United States and other countries across the world.

These memorials also include concentration camps marketed in a booming industry called "atrocities tourism." International tourists pay to visit these sites and collect souvenirs rather than commemorating and honoring those lost human lives in a sacred and respectful way. While the Nuremberg Trials after the Holocaust brought many war criminals to justice, the Khmer Rouge Tribunal has had different outcomes: \$200 million dollars spent on a hybrid international court has brought only one guilty conviction for crimes against humanity.

Schlund-Vials compared this with convictions from the Bosnia, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone war crime tribunals. The question of inadequate reparations still looms for the mass graves, Khmer Rouge prisons, and genocide memorials being bought and marketed by private tourist companies in Cambodia today. Symbolic

reparations are being demanded by communal groups for a public apology for the genocide, as well as public education programs.

However these initiatives are not yet state authorized. This is where the memory of individual Cambodian Americans comes into play. Schlund-Vials rooted the memory work of Cambodian American hip-hop and performance artists such as praCh Li and Anida Yoeu Ali to this juridical imaginary. praCh Li combines traditional Cambodian music with American hip hop inspired by growing up in Compton with N.W.A., Public Enemy, and south Bronx formations. Asian American rap artists are inspired by the political expectation of hip hop and the community-based four (or nine) elements of hip hop which empower memory workers to share their message with the community through creative mediums.

Engaging and inspiring students with a truly candid and meaningful lecture on the past, Schlund-Vials urged students to conduct original research on topics such as the phenomenon of Nazi zombies that illustrate our modern anxieties of our sense of community belonging in the present and future. We hope she will visit UT Austin again soon.

*Tu-Uyen Nguyen graduated in May 2014 in Asian American Studies, Classics, and Latin.*

## CAAS Speakers and Events (September 2013 – June 2014)



Deepa Kumar's talk on September 12, 2013

**“Constructing the Muslim Enemy from the Crusades to 9/11,” talk by Dr. Deepa Kumar**  
Read the article about this event on page 5.

**“A Nation of Immigrants? History, Politics and Immigration Reform,” talk by Dr. Mae Ngai**  
Read the article about this event on page 7.

### Undocu-Asian Teach-In

Read the article about this event on pages 1 and 4.

### War, Genocide, and Justice: Cambodian American Memory Work

Read the article about this event on page 9.

### Battling the Khmer Rouge: Cambodian American Hip Hop

Leading scholar of Cambodian American culture and diaspora, Dr. Cathy Schlund-Vials delivered a public lecture at the Asian American Resource Center about popular culture drawing from her book *War, Genocide, and Justice: Cambodian American Memory Work*. This was a collaborative event with the Center for Asian American Studies at UT Austin and the Asian American Resource Center at the City of Austin.

### The Strange Career of the Filipino ‘National’: Race, Immigration, and the Bordering of U.S. Empire

Dr. Rick Baldoz, assistant professor in sociology at Oberlin College delivered a talk exploring the incorporation of Filipino immigrants in the United States during the first half of the twentieth century, focusing on the interplay of colonialism, racial boundaries and citizenship policy. He is the author of the award winning book, *The*

*Third Asiatic Invasion: Empire and Migration in Filipino America, 1898-1946* (NYU 2011). He is currently working on a book project about the 1965 Hart-Celler Immigration Act, examining this historical legislation against the backdrop of Cold War politics, anti-colonial upheaval, and domestic civil rights mobilization.

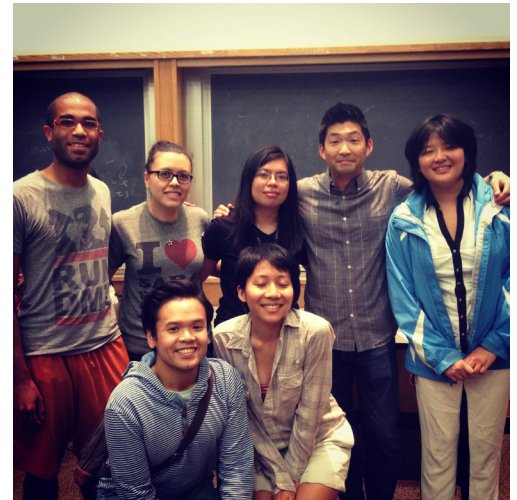
### Gateway to the Orient: Seattle's Nikkei and West Coast Urban History

Dr. Shelley Lee is an associate professor of history and comparative American studies at Oberlin College. CAAS with the support from the Institute for Historical Studies hosted a talk with Lee at the end of March. Through the case of Japanese Americans in Seattle, Washington before World War II, her talk explored the significance of U.S. Pacific expansion and Japanese migration for West Coast urban development, and how, in turn, the Pacific port's pursuit of status as a “gateway to the Orient” shaped the lives of its Asian residents. Lee is the author of two books, *Claiming the Oriental Gateway: Prewar Seattle and Japanese America* (Temple, 2011) and *A New History of Asian America* (Routledge, 2013). She is currently working on a project about post-1965 Korean immigration and urban politics in Los Angeles.

### The Texas Film Premiere of “Maria the Korean Bride: 50 Weddings/50 Husbands”

CAAS and UT Korean Student Association organized a film screening and Q&A with filmmaker Maria Yoon. Yoon is a first generation Korean-American performance artist based in New York City. Like many single women of a certain age, Maria felt a growing pressure to wed. So she took matrimony to the next level. Calling herself ‘the voice of the unmarried

Asian-American woman’ she became Maria the Korean Bride, a woman to get married in all fifty states. Yoon’s film explores the institution of marriage and how marriage is seen in other cultures. Check out the film website: [www.mariathekoreanbride.com](http://www.mariathekoreanbride.com)



Phil Yu with Asian American Studies students and alumni

### Angry Asian Man Visits UT Austin

The Asian Desi Pacific Islander Collective (APAC), Campus Events + Entertainment Asian American Culture and the Center for Asian American Studies hosted an event with Phil Yu, founder and editor of the blog Angry Asian Man. Yu spoke about the importance of taking Asian American Studies courses as an undergrad at Northwestern and influencing the creation of his popular cultural commentary blog. The event was part of APAC’s Asian American Heritage Week in April.

Visit [www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/aas/events/Video\\_Audio.php](http://www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/aas/events/Video_Audio.php) for video and audio recordings of some of these events.

### Mark your Calendars for CAAS Fall 2014 Events

**September 25 at 5:30pm**— Film Screening: “MUTINY: Asians Storm British Music”

**September 26 at 12pm** – Book talk with Vivek Bald: “Bengali Harlem and the Lost Histories of South Asian America”

For more details on these events, visit [www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/aas](http://www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/aas)



## Alumni Notes



Vivian Mai-Tran with her fiancé at her medical school graduation

### 2004

**NEESHA DAVÉ** joined the Board of Directors of the Lilith Fund for Reproductive Equity, an abortion fund that provides financial assistance to low-income Texans seeking abortion services.

### 2005

**MADHAVI PATKI (née KASBEKAR)** recently launched her own immigration law practice called Patki Immigration Services: <http://www.patkilaw.com>

### 2009

**WILLIAM LIU** is starting his first year at KIPP Generations as a senior level AP Biology Teacher.

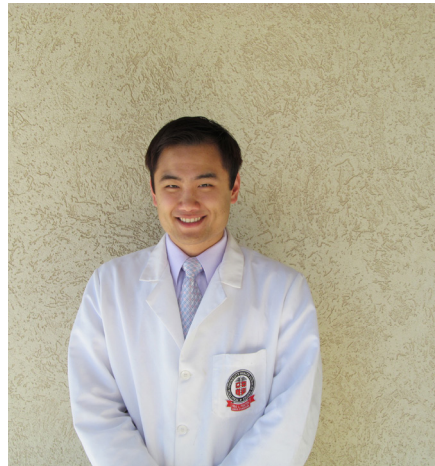
### 2010

**DR. VIVIAN MAI-TRAN** graduated from The University of Texas Medical School at Houston this past May. She will be moving to New York to intern at Maimonides Medical Center in Brooklyn and will complete four years of radiology residency at Beth Israel in Manhattan.

Mai-Tran also recently became engaged in November 2013 to Jacob Wang, her high school sweetheart, who took an Asian American Studies course with her in Spring 2008 where they worked on an exhibit at the Bob Bullock Museum called "Telling Our Stories: The Vietnamese Americans in Texas." Their wedding will be in Houston, TX in March 2015.

### 2011

**JASON WANG** is in his 4th and final year of medical school at the Texas Tech Paul Foster School of Medicine in El Paso. He plans to pursue a career in surgery and this upcoming year he has been accepted for one-month clinical away rotations at The Mayo Clinic in Scottsdale for Cardiothoracic Surgery and at the National Taiwan University for Otolaryngology. He also published an article in the *Texas Medical Association Magazine* in April: <http://bit.ly/1yO7O9s>



Jason Wang



Dean Pham at his MPH graduation

**DEAN PHAM** recently graduated from The University of Texas at Houston with a Master of Public Health degree.

### 2013

**JULIAN JOSEPH** works at the Asian American Resource Center in Austin, TX assisting with events and programs.

### Alumni Stay Connected to CAAS

Did you major or minor in Asian American Studies at UT? CAAS wants to hear from you!

Please email us at [aasinfo@utlists.utexas.edu](mailto:aasinfo@utlists.utexas.edu) with your contact information and news about what you're up to.

We've also created an Alumni Network page on the CAAS website as well as a LinkedIn group for alums and majors to connect.

## New AAS Faculty Affiliate, Dr. Miyong Kim

Miyong Kim is the La Quinta Centennial Endowed Professor in the School of Nursing. She is also the Associate Vice President for Community Health Engagement in the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement at UT Austin.

Kim is a translational researcher who has built a strong program of research that has focused on

community-based participatory research (CBPR) as means of reducing cardiovascular health related health disparities among traditionally underserved ethnic minority populations. Her research program examines the effectiveness of self-care strategies for improving health outcomes and overcoming racial, ethnic and social disparities in healthcare. Using an immigrant community as a community laboratory

to build sound translational science, her recent work has been focused on Korean Americans. She has conducted several descriptive studies to explore and better define barriers and facilitators to equitable care for this racial and ethnic minority population.



## Support CAAS

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Make your tax-deductible contribution to Asian American Studies at The University of Texas at Austin. Our goal is to increase awareness of Asian American issues by facilitating multidisciplinary teaching and research enabling students to become active members of their community. Your support will allow our Center to develop new courses, provide scholarships for students, increase research opportunities, and sponsor university and public programs.

### MAIL

Mail your check to:  
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*Center of Asian American Studies*  
*210 W. 24th St. Stop A2200*  
*Austin, TX 78712-1695*

Make checks payable to The University of Texas and indicate in the memo line that you are supporting the **Center for Asian American Studies**.

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Contact Kathleen Aronson, Assistant Dean of Development, at [mcaronson@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:mcaronson@austin.utexas.edu) or call (512) 475-9763 to receive more information.

Thank you for your contribution and continued support!

## Stay Connected to CAAS

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Subscribe to the Asian American Studies Listserv

Provide your name and email address to [aasinfo@utlists.utexas.edu](mailto:aasinfo@utlists.utexas.edu) to receive emails about events, Asian American studies related information such as job and proposal announcements, conferences and more.

### E-NEWSLETTER

Subscribe to our Electronic Newsletter, **Red Threads**

The e-newsletter is emailed at the end of each semester. To be added to the mailing list, send an email to [aasinfo@utlists.utexas.edu](mailto:aasinfo@utlists.utexas.edu).

### GET SOCIAL

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